

So I hope my colleagues will join me. Go to my Web site at [gil.house.gov](http://gil.house.gov); there is a lot of information there. We have about 70 sponsors right now; we would like to get that to 220. Please join me in the Pharmaceutical Market Access Act of 2005.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

#### PRIORITIES: VETERANS, BANKRUPTCY, AND THE ESTATE TAX

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to comment on the Republicans' priorities. Many of them talk about protecting veterans and making sure that veterans have the support they need when they return from protecting this country's freedom in Iraq.

Today the House passed H.R. 8 to make permanent the repeal of the estate tax. This bill will cost the American taxpayers \$295 billion over the next 10 years. The cost on the first 2 years could go as high as \$1 trillion.

This bill gives a tax break to the wealthiest three-tenths of 1 percent of estates, while imposing a new capital gains tax on most of us, including small business owners and farmers. At the same time, the Republicans passed a budget that calls for \$800 million in cuts to the VA over the next 5 years.

Clearly, the Republicans are attempting to balance the budget on the backs of the veterans.

Tomorrow, this same House will vote on bankruptcy legislation that does not protect our veterans. Many of our servicemembers, especially the citizen soldiers of the Guard and the Reserve forces, face terrible financial problems because they do not qualify for a narrow protection of debt incurred while on duty if S. 256 becomes law.

Since 9/11, approximately half a million Reservists and Guardsmen have been called to active duty, some more than once. Hundreds of thousands of Reservists and National Guardsmen are currently activated in support of the ongoing military operations. According to the National Guard, four out of 10 members of the National Guard and Reservist forces lose income when they

leave their civilian jobs for active duty.

The people of this country need to see what policies the Republicans actually vote for. They talk the talk very well, but they do not walk the walk or roll the roll for our veterans who have sacrificed their bodies for this Nation.

Today, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), our ranking member, filed a bill for mental health for our veterans. It is clear that they are slipping through the cracks, and we need to focus our attention on how to assist veterans returning from the war, whether it is economic, whether it is health care, or whether it is to make sure that they have their jobs and have a seamless transition.

We need to do more than talk the talk. We need to make sure that our money follows all of this rhetoric we have on the floor constantly about how we support the veterans. It should not be just talk, but it should be our actions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to give my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Louisiana?

There was no objection.

#### TOUGH ISSUES FACING LOUISIANA FARMERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the farming community of southwest Louisiana. During the March district work period, I held community meetings in all eight parishes of my district to discuss issues facing my constituents. At each meeting, farmers and their families filled the rooms to ask for help.

Farming in Louisiana is not just a job for these men and women, Mr. Speaker. They love the land that they work, and they want to ensure that their livelihood is preserved for generations to come, but they are struggling to survive. Unless Congress can come to their aid, these farmers may not be in business by the end of the year.

Let me give some examples. Steve Broussard is a banker in my district and Steve works with farm loans for local growers, and he told me four rice farmers in our district have been forced to quit already this year. By the end of

this season, eight more could be out of business. For a rural community, farms are the foundation of a local economy. The closure of a single farm means the loss of a customer for many local businesses and a reduction of revenue for schools, public utilities, and hospitals in these communities.

Cindy Lahaye works in a hospital in Mamou, Louisiana; and Cindy told me that in this town of 3,500, they are feeling the ripple effect at their rural hospital because the surrounding farming community cannot afford health care at this time. This is a problem that begins with our farmers and affects every one of us.

In my recent conversations, I asked my constituents for input and suggestions on what could be done to provide relief for our farming community. First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, we must reopen important markets that have been closed for various political reasons. I had a farmer in Ville Platte, Louisiana, who told me, I have bins full of rice, but I am broke. Bumper crops in the past few years have caused prices to drop, and with a new crop going into the field, there is no place to move the surpluses from the past 2 years. Iraq, Iran, and Cuba were all some of the largest importers of U.S. rice, and all three of these export markets remain restricted.

Cuba, for example, had resumed importing agricultural commodities from U.S. farmers because of the provisions in the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000. A recent ruling by the Office of Foreign Assets Control threatens to derail this re-emerging market. My colleague from Missouri has introduced a bill that could provide immediate relief for the rice farmers of my district. H.R. 1339 amends the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000 to clarify allowable payment terms for sales of agricultural commodities and products to Cuba.

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I am proud to cosponsor this bill, and I pledge my support for this legislation.

Secondly, taxpayer dollars dedicated to the United States Agency for International Development and the PL 480 program should be used to purchase U.S. commodities and not foreign food. The program serves two purposes. One, it provides emergency and non-emergency food aid to countries in need; and, secondly, the program helps American farmers since the money is used to purchase American agricultural products.

Wynn Watkins of Jefferson Davis Parish, Mr. Speaker, told me this. Congressman BOUSTANY, he said, all we have here is rice. It is the busiest time of the year for us, and we all came out of our fields to hear you speak today. We are being asked to send our boys to Iraq and Iraq cannot take our rice. Where is the justice in that? I agree with Wynn Watkins, Mr. Speaker.